



City of Hamilton Planning and Development Department

1996

## SUBURBAN COMMERCIAL

It's a typical Saturday morning and Tom and Mary are planning what stores they are going to visit. After thinking about their list, Tom and Mary have decided that today they are going to make the following stops:



The first stop is going to be at the "Local Commercial" store to pick-up a newspaper. From here, Tom and Mary are going to have to travel along the "Ribbon Commercial" areas of the City to get to the "Neighbourhood Commercial" plaza to return the video they rented. Travelling further along the "Ribbon Commercial" area, Tom and Mary will stop at the "Highway Commercial" plaza to see if they can find a new sofa. Not having any luck, Tom and Mary decide to go to one of the "Shopping Centres" in the City. But first, which type of shopping centre should they go to? The "Convenience", "Neighbourhood", "Community", "District" or the "Sub-Regional" shopping centre? Or maybe it would just be easier to go to the "Power Centre" and see what is available at the "Big-Box Retailer" or the new factory store that has opened in the East Mountain Industrial Business Park.



HAMILTON'S PLAN FOR TOMORROW

I don't know about you, but nobody we know plans their shopping trips on the basis of "Local" versus "Highway" commercial uses. Rather, decisions are made about the type and size of store. Yet the City's Official Plan divides and further divides commercial activities into a variety of categories. How did this happen and what do these categories mean? Are these categories still relevant?

At the turn of the century, downtown Hamilton was the retail and business location of choice. Retail stores and households were all located in and around the downtown area. However, after 1945, new neighbourhoods were planned and built. As these new suburban neighbourhoods developed, retailers and entrepreneurs noticed that there were new retailing opportunities in the suburban areas. Gradually, convenience stores and shopping plazas were built to serve the needs of these new households.

The new neighbourhoods were designed such that residential, commercial and industrial land uses would be directed to different parts of the City. The most convenient way to travel between these areas was by car. In designing the new plazas, ample parking was provided. In addition, commercial uses were divided into a variety of categories in an attempt to minimize automobile traffic in and around residential areas.



## SHOPPING MALLS

Today, suburban malls are so common, so everyday, that we take them for granted. But it was not always this way. The shopping mall, as a retailing centre, grew out of the postwar suburban population and housing boom and over time the shopping mall has replaced the downtown as the central focus of community activity in the suburbs.

Shopping malls are part of the suburban landscape. Today, if you asked someone to pick one symbol that would represent contemporary suburban life, chances are they would pick the shopping mall. What Main Street, the malt shop, and the diner were to the teenagers of the postwar period, the mall is to the teens of the 1990s. In fact, for many people, life before the malls is life from another historical era. Going to the mall has gone beyond just purchasing something - going to the mall has become an activity in its own right.

Not only can you choose from a variety of stores in the shopping mall, but many malls also contain community service agencies and other activities. Before the stores open, many people meet and socialize in the mall as part of walking clubs. Malls are now more than just a collection of stores, malls have become a central focus place for community activities.

Commercial uses were divided into 4 categories:

## LOCAL COMMERCIAL

These uses are intended to be those that you need near your home. A variety store is typical of a local commercial use.

Neighbourhood plans were prepared with the idea that local commercial sites would be primarily dependent on pedestrian access. Easy access to the local store was to be along local streets and connecting walkways. Over time, many of these walkways have been closed or were never provided when the subdivision was developed. The result is that many local commercial areas are no longer within convenient walking distance or are separated from the surrounding residential areas by main roads that carry a high volume of traffic at high speeds.

## EXTENDED COMMERCIAL

This category refers to commercial uses located along main roads and includes both "ribbon commercial" uses and "highway commercial" uses. No ribbon commercial areas located on smaller lots and serve residents in the neighbourhood. Ribbon commercial areas are located along Fennell Avenue or Mohawk Road.

Highway commercial uses are located along major streets such as Upper James Street. People generally drive to these stores and generally involve major or infrequently purchased items such as furniture or appliances.

## SHOPPING CENTRES

Shopping centres, or "the mall", are commercial uses planned as one unit and are generally larger than 15,000 sq.ft. Shopping centres vary in size, from the smaller convenience shopping centres, to the larger regional shopping centres, such as Limeridge Mall. The number and location of shopping centres is affected by the type of products sold and the minimum number of people necessary to make a shopping centre viable.

## Points/Questions to Ponder:

- ⇒ Should there be a hierarchy of commercial uses?
- ⇒ Is the existing hierarchy still applicable?
- ⇒ Is road access still the best criteria for separating commercial uses into types?
- ⇒ Should the location of plazas and commercial stores be determined by the type of use (e.g. variety store, video store, department store) or should the emphasis be on the size of the store or plaza?
- ⇒ What type of stores would you want to have near your house? What type of stores should be located along the major streets?

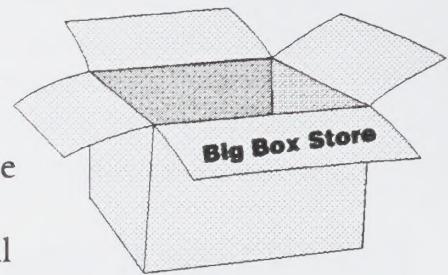


## VALUE RETAILING - "BIG-BOX, POWER CENTRES AND FACTORY OUTLET"

In the 1990s, a new type of retail store became popular. The "Big-Box", "Power Centre" and "Factory Outlet" began to compete with the traditional shopping mall. While many planners academically debated whether these were retail or industrial activities, more and more consumers shopped at these stores. For consumers, superstores provide a wide range of products at attractive prices.

Superstores are not without their critics. Superstores are criticized for sapping the economic vitality of downtowns and displacing existing businesses. These criticisms are similar to those expressed when shopping malls were first being developed in the 1960s. Some demographers and economists argue that superstores are simply a passing fad and that as the baby-boomers age and their children leave home for university or to start their own families, consumers will demand more personalized service. Others argue that consumers will continue to shop at superstores because these stores offer value and selection.

Big-box retailers draw on a large area for consumers. This means there are a limited number of sites that can be developed for big-box retailing. As such, there is often a great deal of debate as to where these stores should be permitted, if they should even be permitted at all.



- ⇒ Are big-box stores a "commercial use" or an "industrial use"?
- ⇒ Where should they be permitted?
- ⇒ Should they be directed to locate in the downtown?
- ⇒ How many stores do we really need? Should the City limit the number of new stores?



For further information on this brochure, please contact Steve Robichaud at (905) 546-4414.

### CITYVIEW

CityView Hamilton's Plan for Tomorrow is your opportunity to present your ideas and thoughts on the future of Hamilton.

Your ideas will ultimately form the basis of a new Official Plan for the City of Hamilton.

Staff of Hamilton's Planning and Development Department are available to answer your questions on any facet of CityView.

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